

To: Governor
From: Buddy B
Re: Follow-up from Bill Jacobs
Date: December 9, 2009

From Bill - The Governor asked me to send him a couple of stories we had written recently regarding the MSA and the renovations needs at MUW should MSA be moved. The first is a story we did in January following an interview with Nora Miller the Vice President of Finance and Administration at MUW. The second story contains follow up quotes from Ms Miller on November 17 which confirm the same renovations needs will be required. Also attached is a fact sheet that was prepared last year regarding MSA and MSMS.

Here are some direct quotes from the Jan 29 story:
"We'd have to have some things done," she said. "MUW doesn't have the money for it."

Miller said school officials have had little contact from the bill's authors - House Education Committee Chairman Rep. Cecil Brown, D-Jackson, and House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rep. Johnny Stringer, D-Montrose - or the Mississippi Department of Education. *"We haven't been really consulted other than we got a call saying if it were moved there, do you have room," Miller said. "Sure, as long as some funds come with it."*

Here are some graphs from the Nov. 17 story.

When the last MSA/MSMS merger was proposed in January, MUW Vice President of Finance and Administration Nora Miller said existing, unused facilities at MUW where legislators wanted to move arts students would need extensive renovations.

The two vacant residence halls and empty classroom space, last used as an elementary school, would require electrical

work, the installation of high-speed lines for Internet access, the installation of new heating and air conditioning systems and remodeled bathrooms, which Miller said were "built for third-graders."

Additionally, Miller said new performance halls and studios would likely be required for MSA students to move to Columbus. She could not estimate the cost of such repairs without knowledge of MSA's exact needs.

Eleven months later, the situation at MUW remains unchanged.

"We have not had any discussions about this," Miller said Monday. "Not from the governor's office, not from K-12. We knew it was being talked about, but there's been no conversations with us."

Please pass these on to Governor as he requested.

Thanks,

Bill

Discussion points on HB 1555 which proposes to move the Mississippi School of the Arts from Brookhaven to the campus of Mississippi University for Women in Columbus.

Summary - HB 1555 was authored by Appropriations Committee Chairman, Rep. Johnny Stringer (D) District 87 representing Jasper, Jones, and Newton Counties and by Education Committee Chairman, Rep Cecil Brown (D) - District 66 representing Hinds County. The bill proposes to close The Mississippi School of the Arts at the campus in Brookhaven and relocate the school onto the campus of the Mississippi University for Women. The bill specifies the ownership of the real and personal property to the

jurisdiction of the Department of Finance and the Department of Education; and repeals the names of the buildings in Brookhaven.

- ❑ Education expense at Brookhaven is too high at \$30,000 per student per year - According to the MS Department of Education, the budgeted 2009 operating costs for Brookhaven is \$20,698 per student - a decrease from 2007 and 2008. In comparison the cost for students at the MS School for Math and Science is \$22,312 per student, which is an increase from 2007 and 2008. Brookhaven is the better value by \$1,614 per student. MSA's per pupil cost continues to decrease as our enrollment increases with no additional costs to the budget. The \$30,000 figure is an erroneous number that has been quoted by opponents of the school for several years. The figure likely includes initial construction costs at the Brookhaven Campus. The cost per student is much higher at the two specialty schools than at traditional high schools, but those community high schools do not include room and board nor 24-hour faculty and staff. MSA and MSMS are specialty schools for gifted students with parents paying \$500 per semester for room and board fees.
- ❑ The MUW campus has the space and buildings to handle the housing and academic needs of MSA - Yes, but? Two dormitories and some classroom space are vacant on the campus but those facilities have been vacant for a number of years and are in need of renovation according to MUW officials. The Brookhaven campus has a six year-old dormitory that can house 150 students. The Brookhaven campus has newly renovated academic facilities as well as theatre, dance and performing arts studios. There is a question if MUW has performing arts facilities available. If not, such facilities will have to be built.
- ❑ What will it cost the State of Mississippi to bring MUW buildings and facilities up to usable standards? - No

one knows at this point, but a Finance and Administration official at MUW admitted to the DAILY LEADER that funding would be needed for renovation and that MUW does not have the funds to renovate the buildings. Over \$18 million dollars was spent in Brookhaven between 2000 and 2003 to build the dormitory, cafeteria and library building; renovate the academic buildings on the historic Whitworth Campus as well as renovation at Brookhaven High School where students also receive instruction in core subjects. HB 1555 does not designate funding to update buildings on the MUW campus.

- ❑ What will happen to the Brookhaven campus? - HB 1555 erroneously gives the real estate and buildings of the Brookhaven campus to the Department of Finance and the Department of Education, but gives no direction to the future use of the campus. Under the original bill setting up the school in 2000 a reverter clause was included that requires the property to be returned to the City of Brookhaven should the school cease to exist. "...This conveyance is expressly subject to the rights of the reverter to the City of Brookhaven...In the event that such buildings, lands, or other properties transferred are not used for the purposes intended, to-wit: the Fine Arts School, School for the Performing Arts, or such other similar educational purposes, to be operated by the State of Mississippi, then the lands, buildings and other improvements shall revert to the City of Brookhaven." Signed by Eric Clark, Secretary of State on Feb 29, 2000.
- ❑ Why did the City of Brookhaven receive the reverter clause? - The taxpayers of Brookhaven gave the State of Mississippi \$4 million in cash plus the land and buildings in downtown Brookhaven in consideration of the State locating the school of the arts in Brookhaven.
- ❑ Why is the Brookhaven campus important to the students and their families? - Early research on the project found the importance of locating high school

age children within their own environment. Administrators of similar type schools advised the importance of the 17 and 18 year-old students not being on a mixed campus with college-aged students. "You cannot imagine the troubles we have here being on a campus with older students," the Director of the Mississippi School of Math and Science was quoted as saying at the time. While Columbus and MUW are delightful places to live and raise a family. The facts remain; Columbus is a college town located a short drive from another college town - Starkville and Mississippi State University. The Brookhaven campus is located in Brookhaven amongst quiet historic residential areas that allow students to feel similar to their own communities across the state. Parents can feel secure that their child is safe. The fact that Lincoln County is Dry is important to many parents.

- ❑ Community Involvement is vital to the success of the students - Brookhaven has over 100-host families who adopt students each year. These volunteers undergo criminal background checks at their own expense. The host families take the students into their homes on weekends and other times welcoming them into their families. These families provide a support parent for the child and a contact for parents living in other parts of the state. Columbus and MUW do not offer such programs to students at the Math and Science School.
- ❑ It seems that every year the MSA is attacked regarding funding issues - Very true, but what education facility is not? Up until last year there has been a battle with a small but vocal group of legislators who are not happy with MSA and feel it should be closed. The fact that in the past two years over \$2 million in scholarships has been awarded to graduating seniors each year and 100% of graduates go on to college has helped settle the argument. But with the current economy, budgets have to be tightened and again MSA is a target. However the plan to move the school will likely be more costly to taxpayers because of the renovation

costs that will be required at MUW to house and educate more than 170 additional students. Two underlying facts are being ignored: (a) the operating cost at MSA is actually cheaper per student than at MSMS! (b) In Columbus, the state of Mississippi has had to rent the facilities from MUW since MSMS opened and would have to rent additional facilities from MUW if MSA moved. At the Brookhaven campus - Mississippi owns the facilities!

- ❑ It is also an economic development issue - The Mississippi School of the Arts and Mississippi School of Math and Science are important economic development tools for Mississippi because of the advanced educational opportunities they offer to young Mississippians. For Southwest Mississippi, MSA is important to the area because it provides over 50 well-paid jobs and makes this corner of the state more attractive to industrial prospects. Moving the school away from Brookhaven just concentrates the booming industrial development of the Golden Triangle area of Columbus, Starkville and West Point and leaves Southwest Mississippi to continue to struggle on its own. That simply is not right or fair!